



United States Department of Interior
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Bureau of Land Management

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Date: February 26, 2004

BLM Finalizes Ward Ranch Exchange near Hauser Lake

BUTTE – Public ownership of the historic Ward Ranch adjacent to Hauser Lake became reality today when the final 1,324 acres were acquired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Butte Field Office. In this phase of the transaction, BLM acquired approximately 970 acres through a land exchange facilitated by The Conservation Fund (TCF). TCF also donated 354 acres to complete the transfer into public ownership.

The BLM and TCF have worked cooperatively since 1998 to acquire the 2,208 acre ranch along the Missouri River. The first phase of the exchange was completed in 2002. Except for one small parcel, the ranch is surrounded by BLM and U.S. Forest Service administered lands. The ranch has high public value because of the Hauser Lake shoreline, excellent big game winter range and waterfowl habitat. The acquisition also secures approximately two miles of the Lewis and Clark Expedition route.

Having the ranch in public ownership will provide excellent recreational opportunities for the public, protect resource and cultural values, and maintain the “open space” character of the area. Management for the newly acquired area will be determined through development of the Butte Resource Management Plan, currently underway.

Interim management will provide protection for the privately-held ranch buildings, while allowing dispersed recreation opportunities.

TCF acts to protect the nation's legacy of land and water resources in partnership with other organizations, public agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals while integrating economic and environmental goals. Since its founding in 1985, TCF has helped its partners safeguard wildlife habitat, greenways, community "greenspace" and historic sites totaling more than 3 million acres throughout the nation. Their headquarters are in Arlington, Virginia.

The acquisition will be complete when land titles are finalized and recorded. For more information, contact Steve Hartmann at the Butte Field Office, (406) 533-7600.

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